

ARTICLE APPEARED
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WASHINGTON TIMES
15 October 1985

Diverse 'Euroterrorists' united in 'global assault' against West

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THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Terrorist groups in Western Europe, including some with diverse political objectives, are cooperating in a new phase of bombings and killings directed against the United States, NATO and Western industrial targets, according to intelligence reports and security analysts.

The effort appears to be part of a larger, coordinated plan to "expel" U.S. interests — both military and political — from key areas of the world, the sources warn.

The new "Euroterrorists," according to these sources, also are aiming to destabilize the Atlantic alliance, stir anti-U.S. sentiments and weaken Europe's defense industries.

And while many European terrorist communiques have stated that their enemy is "Western imperialist targets," this in effect means "U.S. imperialism," several experts said.

Earlier this year two principal terrorist organizations — West Germany's Red Army Faction and France's Direct Action — issued a statement saying that they were creating a joint "political-military front."

The RAF, an outgrowth of the outlawed Baader-Meinhof gang, and Direct Action took responsibility for

detonating a car bomb in August that killed two Americans and injured 20 others at the U.S. Rhein-Main Air Force Base in Frankfurt. The terrorists apparently also had murdered a U.S. soldier in West Germany to obtain his identity papers to smuggle the bomb onto the heavily-guarded base.

The following month three mobile radar units at a U.S. air base in southern West Germany were destroyed by bombs. Security officials blamed the RAF for the attack. The RAF and Direct Action have both used explosives stolen from Belgium.

Both groups are believed to have strong ties to another terrorist group in Belgium called the Fighting Communist Cells. That group has staged a series of bomb-

ings against NATO installations beginning in 1984. This three-way linkage has security experts convinced that the Euroterrorists have embarked on a new strategy of transnational coordination and cooperation.

"Their alliance is one of necessity," said Dr. Avigdor Haselkorn, a senior analyst at Analytical Assessments Corp. in Los Angeles. "It is a question of tactics, covert activities rather than ideological linkage."

Robert Kupperman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, added: "All of this business is intended to introduce increased uncertainties within NATO. None of these groups is large enough or capable of causing immense physical injuries. The purpose is destabilization."

Earlier this year, Rene Audran, director of international arms sales at the French Defense Ministry, was shot and killed outside his home near Paris. A week later, Ernst Zimmermann, an executive with a German engineering firm that manufactures engines for NATO tanks and aircraft, was assassinated in Munich.

While Direct Action claimed responsibility for the two attacks, officials believe that members of the RAF carried out the killings, with Direct Action providing logistical support.

The attacks — large and small — are showing no signs of letting up.

Western analysts and officials point to the recent spate of bombings in West Germany, France and Belgium as indications that the terrorists are continuing to target industrial, political and NATO facilities.

Last week in Brussels, for example, a car bomb went off in front of the headquarters of the Brussels gas and electricity company, shattering all of the building's windows. The Fighting Communist Cells claimed responsibility for the attack and for 15 previous bombings in Belgium.

Over the weekend another blast went off outside the headquarters of the steel company. An anonymous caller told police the Fighting Communist Cells were responsible, but

authorities said it could have been a "copy cat" attack perpetrated by others.

In the past two weeks West Germany also has been hit with a spate of fire bombs. Six large department stores in Hamburg were hit, as was a car dealership and a botanical research institute in Cologne.

A group calling itself the Revolutionary Cells, believed tied to the RAF, took responsibility for the blasts in Cologne and indicated that its intended target was not the botanical research institute, but the Genetic Engineering Institute next door.

Analysts note that a Dutch manual for sabotage has been circulating in several West European countries. Recommending "direct action" against some 270 agents and subsidiaries of U.S. firms in Europe, the manual draws attention to those companies involved in genetic research into seeds and crops, which it terms a capitalist plot against the Third World. It could not be immediately determined if the Genetic Engineering Institute in Cologne

was listed in the manual.

Terrorism experts here and abroad believe that the resurgence in Euroterrorism is due in part to the failure of the "peace movement" to halt NATO's deployment of U.S. Pershing and cruise missiles in Western Europe.

Many of the anti-nuclear activists, the experts say, have grown cynical and have been recruited by the more hardened terrorist groups into supporting — and participating in — direct attacks on military and political targets.

It is believed that some of the lower yield and incendiary bombings have been committed by these relatively new "recruits," perhaps as training exercises. The more lethal activities, such as the murder of the U.S. soldier and bombing at Rhein-Main AFB, are thought to have been carried out by hard-core terrorists.

Behind it all is a larger, sinister picture, some experts believe. "What we're seeing is just part of the forest," said Yonah Alexander, a terrorism analyst at Georgetown CSIS.

Euroterrorism "is a global assault against the West and its interests." It

is supported by organizations cooperating not so much out of ideological affiliation "but to further their own causes," he said.

Mr. Alexander believes that the Soviet Union, operating through East European countries such as East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, is actively encouraging and aiding this terrorist effort. "It is not necessary to have direct command from Moscow," Mr. Alexander said. "They operate through proxies."

An assessment prepared for the CIA and obtained by The Washington Times outlines what it terms "a new coordinated radical expulsion

strategy" behind terrorist activities against the West.

While focusing on terrorism in regions outside of Western Europe (including the Mideast, Asia, Africa and Central America), the report nonetheless draws attention to common "elements" behind the expulsion strategy. These include: "dislodging U.S. of external strategic assets; stretching U.S. forces thin; [and] direct targeting of overseas U.S. presence and interests."

Direct control by the Soviet Union, the CIA report notes, "is not necessary for reaping benefits of radical offensive." But it adds that the "Soviets are not passive watchers but actively support" terrorists.

Earlier this year, French and German officials announced that they were stepping up cooperative efforts to counter Euroterrorism by creating a joint task force and by exchanging more information.

"It is too little, too late," said CSIS' Alexander. Added Mr. Kupperman: "The Germans are methodical and the French are moody. They've worked out their problems on alternate days."

The net result of Euroterrorism, Mr. Kupperman said, is more to frighten than to wreak wide-scale destruction.

"They want to scare people, but they are not dealing with the big-time problems (like the Middle East)," he said. "You won't see the big, daring operations that we see in the Middle East because the Soviets won't allow it, and they [Euroterrorists] don't have the resources for it," he said.

"NATO won't collapse because of this. But people will suffer disproportionately to the real threat that exists."